

IN THE CLAIMS:

Kindly amend claims 1, 5, 16, 18 and 20-22 and cancel claims 12 and 15, all without prejudice, as follows:

1. (Currently Amended) A convertible cane comprising a pair of separate walking canes each having an upright support providing an exterior, a foot adjacent a lower end of the support and a handle adjacent an upper end of the support allowing each handle to be grasped by a different hand of a user allowing the canes to be used separately and independently, the handles comprising a long dimension for accommodating a width of a hand of the user and a short dimension providing a thickness of the handle, and a connector detachably securing the canes together in a position wherein the support exteriors and the long dimensions of the handles are in side-by-side juxtaposed relation so the canes, when secured together, can be used as a single cane.

2. (Previously Amended) The convertible cane of claim 1 wherein each foot comprises an resilient pad.

3. (Previously Amended) The convertible cane of claim 2 wherein the resilient pad is at least half of the cross-sectional area of the support.

4. (Previously Amended) The convertible cane of claim 1 wherein the feet, in the side-by-side position of the supports, provide a pair of flat surfaces defining a single plane thereby providing a combined foot for supporting the convertible cane when it is used as a single cane.

5. (Currently Amended) The convertible cane of claim 1 wherein the handles, in the side-by-side position of the support exteriors, abut and provide a combined handle for grasping by the user when the convertible cane is used as a single cane, the supports being generally linear and lying in a common plane, the handles in the side-by-side position of the long dimensions thereof lie in the common plane.

6. (Previously Amended) The convertible cane of claim 5 wherein the combined handle provides a hand receiving section having a curved upper surface, the hand receiving section being not more than about 3" in width.

7. (Previously Amended) The convertible cane of claim 1 wherein the handles, in the side-by-side position of the support exteriors, are spaced apart and one of the handles provides a second handle for

grasping by the user when the convertible cane is used as a single cane.

8. (Previously Amended) The convertible cane of claim 1 wherein the feet each comprise a rubber pad.

9. (Withdrawn) The convertible cane of claim 1 wherein the connector comprises a hook-and-loop fastener on the canes.

10. (Originally submitted) The convertible cane of claim 1 wherein the connector comprises a key hole slot on one of the canes and a headed pin on the other cane, friction between the pin and slot acting to resist relative vertical movement between the canes.

11. (Withdrawn) The convertible cane of claim 1 wherein the connector comprises a protuberance fixed to a first cane at an acute angle and a second cane provides a passage receiving the protuberance and further comprising a latch selectively preventing horizontal movement of the first and second canes.

12. (Cancelled)

13. (Withdrawn - Previously Amended) The convertible cane of claim 1 wherein the connector comprises a slot on each of the canes which mate in the position wherein the support exteriors are in side-by-side relation and a pivoted tab for movement between a first position residing in both slots and a second position outside at least one of the slots.

14. (Withdrawn) The convertible cane of claim 13 wherein the second connector comprises a fastener comprising a threaded shank and a threaded nut.

15. (Cancelled)

16. (Currently Amended) A convertible cane assembly comprising a pair of walking canes each having an upright support providing an exterior, a foot adjacent a lower end of the support and a handle adjacent an upper end of the support allowing each handle to be grasped by a user's hand so the canes are useable separately and independently, the handles comprising a long dimension for accommodating a width of a hand of the user and a short dimension providing a thickness of the handle, and a connector securing the canes together in a side-by-side position where the support exteriors are in facing relation and the long dimension of the

handles are in side-by-side juxtaposed relation so the assembly acts as a single cane with the juxtaposed handles providing a support for grasping by a user's hand in the side-by-side position.

17. (Previously Amended) The convertible cane of claim 16 wherein the feet, in the side-by-side position of the support exteriors, provide a pair of flat surfaces defining a single plane and thereby provide a support for a user's load.

18. (Currently Amended) The convertible cane of claim 16 wherein the handles, in the side-by-side position of the supports, abut and provide a combined handle for grasping by the user when the convertible cane is used as a single cane.

19. (Previously Amended) The convertible cane of claim 16 wherein the handles, in the side-by-side position of the support exteriors, are spaced apart and one of the handles provides a second handle for grasping by the user when the convertible cane is used as a single cane.

20. (Currently Amended) A method of using a convertible cane assembly of the type having a pair of walking canes each having an upright support providing an exterior, a foot adjacent a lower end

of the support and a handle having a long dimension accommodating a width of a hand of the user and a short dimension providing a thickness of the handle, adjacent an upper end of the support allowing each handle to be grasped by a different hand of a user, the method comprising

attaching the canes in side-by-side relation where the support exteriors are in facing relation and the long dimension of the handles are in side-by-side juxtaposed relation to provide a single cane and using the single cane as a walking aid; and

detaching the canes from the side-by-side relation and using the canes separately and simultaneously as canes providing walking aids.

21. (Currently Amended) The convertible cane of claim 1 wherein, in the side-by-side juxtaposed relation of the handles, the handles are parallel and abut.

22. (Currently Amended) The convertible cane of claim 16 wherein, in the side-by-side juxtaposed relation of the handles, the handles are parallel and abut.